



Shelterbelt Centre Pest Leaflets

FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR

Host: Trembling aspen, poplar and other trees and shrubs.

Appearance and Life History: Larvae emerge from egg bands in the spring, just as the foliage begins to appear on the trees. Larvae are dark brown with broad blue bands along each side and marked with a row of white key-hole shaped markings down the centre of the back. Contrary to their name, forest tent caterpillars do not construct a tent, but feed openly on the foliage. By mid to late June, the full grown larvae are 45 to 55 mm in length. The moths are present from mid-July to early August. After mating, the females deposit egg bands containing 100 to 200 eggs on twigs of host trees. The egg bands are 10 to 20 mm long and are covered with a foamy, dark-coloured, protective substance. The forest tent caterpillar completes one generation a year.

Damage: Forest tent caterpillar damage can range from a thinning of the crown to complete defoliation. After a severe attack most trees will re-foliate the same year. Trees may suffer top dieback or die if defoliated three or more consecutive years.



Control: Natural factors such as disease, parasites, predators, starvation and adverse weather usually keep populations low. Where practical, some control can be achieved by removing the egg bands from the host trees late in the fall or early spring. For large shelterbelts, the larval stage may be sprayed with an insecticide such as malathion, acephate, carbaryl, deltamethrin, or *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Malathion, deltamethrin, and *Bacillus thuringiensis* are also registered for aerial application. Application of insecticides should be conducted in late May to early June while larvae are small and damage is light. Spraying will probably be required if the number of egg bands on the tree is greater than the trunk diameter in centimeters, measured at approximately 1.5 m above ground level.



For further information please contact:

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